Minutes of the AMS Governance Committee
(Minutes for November 15th, 2021 Meeting at 4pm | AMS Nest Room: 3529)

Attendance

Present: Sheldon Goldfarb (Archivist and Clerk of Council), Saad Shoaib (VP External), Romina Hajizadeh, Alina Bhimji (Vice-Chair), Cole Evans (President), Rebecca Liu

Regrets: Kamil Kanji (Chair), Katherine Feng, Teddy O'Donnell

Guests: Oscar Yu (CEO), Jessica Iverson (UBC Senate and Curriculum Services), Dana Turdy

Recording Secretary: Romina Hajizadeh

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:10pm.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Approval of the Agenda

Moved: Saad Seconded: Alina

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT the agenda be adopted.”
Agenda Items

1. **Introductions**
   Tabled

2. **Approval of Minutes**
   
   Moved: Romina     Seconded: Alina

   “BE IT RESOLVED the Governance Committee meeting minutes of November 8 are approved”

3. **Elections Items from the Chief Electoral Officer**
   
   Olivia: We were working on a contract with UBC, Sheldon can you add on?

   Sheldon: The first thing is whether Jessica and UBC agree

   Jessica: It looks fine. There will be some revisions, first I think we need a clause that says the University can take elections back at any time, per the University act. Otherwise, the largest issue I’ve run into as RO is when the societies are running Senate faculty elections and there were discrepancies in votership, but I think those concerns have been addressed. It looked good from my perspective.

   Sheldon: When you have the revisions you can send them our way.

   Jessica: Thank you. It’s nice to see it on paper and I think it will be a good movement for the University and the AMS for elections.

   Olivia: I talked to the student senate caucus. They did have some concerns, one was the CUS election in January. The student senators want the election to be after the AMS elections in March. I’ll leave it to them to decide. The other two concerns was regarding the Kinesiology students being in faculty of education and nursing students in Applied Science. The Concern was should we have two ballots for one election?

   Saad: You can always have two ballots. Another point I wanted to raise was that I agree with the statutory responsibility of the University, but I think we should add a clause that
includes a written notice from the University giving the AMS a heads-up they're taking back the elections.

Jessica: Sure, that's fine. I think building in some notice will be beneficial to everyone.

Olivia: I’d love to hear what people think about whether we should have two ballots for one election.

Saad: just to clarify, is this splitting up the faculty senator elections and the executive elections?

Olivia: The Faculty Student Senator elections will be on the ballots for constituencies. So the question is, should Nursing students be voting in the EUS elections for the student senator, or should they have their own ballot?

Jessica: There’s just one seat per faculty, but undergrad societies don’t always line up with that. Nursing is a good example, they’re in Applied Science but they’re not in the EUS.

Cole: I think the only two options are either AMS runs it as a general or UBC runs it. You wouldn’t have a situation where you try to have constituencies to work together on elections or delegate to the largest one. So I would say we have to decide between those two.

Olivia: It’s a confusing situation for sure.

Cole: We’ve talked in the past about aligning constituency elections to happen during the same period of time, so if we were to run ballots for student senator elections they could run at the same time. So when students go to vote for constituency elections they can also vote for their student senators, and it streamlines the election period. There are some tricky ones like education, but for the most part all the big constituencies have their elections at the same time.

Olivia: I like that.

Sheldon: What did the contract say?
Olivia: Faculty student senators are in the constituency elections. At the end of the day, we want the contract to suggest the AMS is doing the elections regardless, but we don’t know yet.

Cole: The issue is constituencies can’t hold elections because it’s complicated with the overlapping demographics. I would say that if there’s one foolproof way of making sure there’s no errors and there’s no inconsistencies would be to have the AMS run the student senator elections directly. But it probably doesn’t matter too much if we have a clause in the contract that explicitly says the AMS runs the student senator elections, regardless of if the AMS or Constituencies run them.

Olivia: The contract does specify how it is done.

Jessica: I think what Cole mentioned about having faculty elections on an undergrad society ballot would privilege people in the undergrad society. It’s important to point out. What about having a separate, AMS ballot at the same time as your general election that is just the faculty student senators?

Olivia: No, students have been very vocal about having it after.

Jessica: Folks can run for more than one seat at a time, just to be clear, so they can run for both faculty or general and if they are successful at both they vacate one seat. My point is people can run in parallel elections.

Olivia: The feedback is that student senators prefer it to be after so people who don’t get the position they want can continue to get a position that they want.

Cole: The only thing is people will then run for both faculty and general, and you’ll also see a lot of people elected for both seats. Then, they’ll probably choose the at large seat and second place will get the faculty seat.

Saad: is there a way to consolidate all the faculty elections into one timeline?

Cole: If you have all the constituency elections running at one time

Sheldon: Why not just have only the senate elections run at once by the AMS?
Olivia: I will say that I am more inclined to have it during constituency elections. One of the factors is so the constituency can promote their positions. It’s a lot of work for the elections committee to promote that at the same time as everything else.

Cole: Last year we talked about an idea to take out BoG and Senate elections to make them separate, but the biggest concern was voter turnout. AMS general gets more exposure and there’s higher turnout. Constituency elections also have more buzz.

Sheldon: Sounds like we’ll have to tweak the contract

Olivia: General consensus is that the AMS conducts these elections on a separate ballot during the same week constituencies run their elections.

Saad: Caveat to that is all constituencies have different timelines

Cole: We’ll have to standardize it.

Saad: Not necessarily. We could do executive and senator elections separately. Like how the CUS wants to do their election in January.

Sheldon: What problem does the CUS pose?

Saad: The problem is to create a general buzz you need to have faculty elections with the constituency elections, and theirs is in January.

Olivia: I will mention there are people in Commerce that are not in CUS.

Saad: Even if you have faculty senator elections standalone in March I think we’ll still have some good buzz. It’ll just be another week of elections. I agree it might not create the same voter turnout but it’ll still be something that could work. So all the faculty senator elections in one timeline, and constituencies can do their own elections.

Cole: That’s basically the same thing as having a standalone student senator election, which student senators were worried about regarding voter turnout.

Saad: I think that if they work with AMS elections then every constituency can promote it well and they’ll be able to achieve a good voter turnout?
Romina: Do we have examples from the past?

Olivia: How was voter turnout last year?

Jessica: I have to look

Sheldon: I remember it being lower than usual.

Jessica: The timelines for senate nominating and the period between voting and nominating are different from society acts. It’s normally longer than the act requires and longer than constituency ones.

Sheldon: Would it be possible for the CUS to elect someone in January?

Jessica: I don’t see it being a problem. But that might put somebody’s activities like nominations in December.

Olivia: In the past, constituencies have not been following the timeline required?

Jessica: There’s regulations, but no specific timeline.

Cole: The biggest concern we ran into is that 2 week voting requirement. Most AMS based elections usually don’t see a voting period longer than a week. It’s not only hard to implement but it’s hard because AMS elections always end in the first week of May, and the Senate starts early May. You need to make sure you’re following the University guidelines, that the constituencies follow it, and to make sure we don’t put too much work on the elections team. By standardizing it, you’re streamlining the workload, regulations, and hopefully improving voter turnout with a designated constituency voting week.

Jessica: The regulations for senate elections are just 5 days of voting. I tend to allow 2x2x2 but the regulations say 5 days.

Sheldon: Then you’re doing what the senate caucus doesn’t want?

Cole: No, because it will be alongside the Constituency elections, so it will have the same voter buzz. However, yes, AMS will run it instead of constituencies. It’s easier for students to see it all in one place at one time.
Saad: Would constituencies be fine with it?

Cole: I don’t see why not, constituencies should be happy because we will pick up the work for them.

Sheldon: But you’re forcing them to move their elections.

Cole: I don’t foresee that being a problem other than with CUS. Any general elections conducted by constituencies would have to occur at a particular time. As well, by having them do their elections before April, you’re giving them ample time to start preparing for the next year, especially for the Student Senators.

Jessica: I’ll confirm that. Our term for all faculties in the Senate is April 1.

Romina: Would constituencies promote the elections or would AMS Elections promote the student senate elections?

Olivia: I think it's in their best interest to promote it.

Cole: They’re promoting elections in general, so the combined promoting power of all the constituencies ultimately brings more voter turnout hopefully.

Jessica: How can I help clarify the faculty bit? I can clarify programs perhaps?

Olivia: That would be nice. Just a list of programs and which faculty they fall under. Under the calendar, Kinesiology doesn’t fall under Education, even though it does.

Jessica: Don’t refer to the calendar. Same thing with the GSS, it’s a bit complicated because not everything is under that. A few big programs have been misunderstood so I’d also be mindful of the GSS ballot.

Olivia: I will point out in the contract it says the AMS is responsible for conducting elections for the GSS, it can be on our ballot or on their own.

Saad: If the GSS doesn’t have a contract with the AMS...

Olivia: Then we’d do the elections for them.
Saad: Are we allowed to?

Cole: The contract expires December 1.
The problem with GSS is we can’t, when it comes to graduate students, there’s two options: we run the GPS ballot at the same time, but if it were to happen at a different time, we’d have to have a conversation with the GSS but that doesn’t even really make sense. We don’t need GSS permission to administer graduate student things, in this case it doesn’t make sense for them to administer their own election when they’re not even all eligible to vote in the GPS elections. Also, the GPS elections are usually at the same time as ours.

Sheldon: It isn’t even our election, it’s the University’s, so if the University says we should do it...

Alina: So right now the contract needs changes?

Olivia: Yes.

Cole: What is the deadline for the contract?

Olivia: I would prefer it to be done by the last council meeting of this semester.

Cole: I doubt we’ll meet in December, so I think the last meeting will be the 24th. I ask because it sounds like we’re going to have to figure out the constituency question before figuring out the contract.

Olivia: You can always suspend code to not have a contract requirement. But yes, BoG and Senate elections nomination period begins the first week of January. It’s a very strict timeline.

Sheldon: You can still have a contract later because the contract doesn’t handle the nomination period, the university does. We can still promote without a contract. AMS Elections monitors the election from the closing of nominations to the counting of ballots. It doesn’t state anything about dates. The contract could be relatively vague.

Cole: If you want a quick fix solution we can make the contract vague, and we can work to figure it out over time. It is prudent to get on this sooner rather than later because the
CUS runs their elections in January. Maybe we should talk about this in the Governance Committee next week?

Jessica: I’ll consult with my director. I would like to see how the faculty elections are going to be conducted because of the history of mishaps.

Olivia: So, Sheldon and I will work on something.

Sheldon: And Jessica you wanted specific things relating to the University taking back elections?

Jessica: Yes, and someone mentioned something about giving notice?

Olivia: Yes, and there is something making a note that we require 90 days notice if you will terminate the elections.

Jessica: Alright.

Alina: Do you guys know what you want to work on?

Sheldon: Yes.

Cole: Sheldon, Olivia, and I can chat offline to share some ideas. We should get this done sooner rather than later.

Olivia: I would send an email to constituency presidents to get their feedback.

Cole: Yes, just be very clear about why we want to do this.

Jessica: I have some action items: faculties, GSS and GPS, and asking about how many details are required for the contract. I’ll get back to you guys when I have answers.

Action items:

  Sheldon and Olivia to draft contract changes in conversation with Jessica. Cole has thoughts. Olivia to consult with constituencies as well.
  Other code changes -- election posters, nomination forms+referendum petitions -- to be discussed at next meeting.
4. Governance Review

Tabled

Next Meeting

The next meeting is Monday, Nov. 22 @ 4 pm

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm.